

III. Vegetation Management

Attainment of the fuels reduction goals of the MMU Fire Management Plan will require on-the-ground effort on the Department's part. Use of CDF Fire Crews (California Department of Corrections), other personnel and equipment will likely be necessary in many areas where stakeholders do not have the finances or resources to do an effective job individually or as a group. The Vegetation Management Program (VMP) is currently the primary vehicle by which CDF resources may be used on privately owned lands. Since 1981, the program has been an effective fuels reduction and rangeland improvement tool.

VMP is a cost-share program; the State's share of a project's cost range from zero to ninety percent. This is based on a public benefits formula, which means the greater benefit to the public, the greater the share of the cost of the project CDF assumes. Fuel reduction projects in critical areas identified in this plan will have a high public-to-private benefits ratio; therefore the Unit's efforts will be concentrated in these areas. For example, a project in the Chowchilla River drainage that will reduce fuels around Ponderosa Basin or Lushmeadows will have a high public-to-private benefit ratio, so a lower landowner contribution is justified. Conversely, projects that are essentially range improvement burns that are not near population concentrations will require a higher degree of landowner proportional costs. This does not mean that rangeland burning is not minor important. Within the last century, range improvement burns have been vital in managing wildland fuels on a landscape basis. However, increasing population in the rural areas has brought constraints such as smoke management and liability concerns. Such constraints have made the LE-7 / range improvement projects less attractive and has put VMP projects in higher demand with ranchers in the unit.

The unit currently has a variety of VMP projects in various stages of preparation;

Battalion 1:

- 1.) Adams VMP – Prescribed Fire/Fuel Modification
800 Acres
Delayed –Pending resources
- 2.) Old Toll VMP – Prescribed Fire/Mechanical Fuel Modification
Acres 1700
Delayed –Pending Resources
- 3.) Hunters Valley VMP – Prescribed Fire/Mechanical Fuel Modification
Acres to be determined
Delayed –Pending Resources
- 4.) Greeley Hill VMP – Prescribed Fire/Mechanical
Acres 2000
Delayed –Pending BLM Budget approval

Battalion 2:

- 1) Ponderosa Basin VMP – Shaded Fuel Break
35 Acres
Pile burning being conducted by staff personnel during NIRA. Additional widening of some parts of the fuel break is being constructed by Mt. Bullion Conservation Camp.
- 2) Von Der Ahe Estate VMP
329 Acres
In-process
A cooperative project with the Mariposa RCD
- 3) Lushmeadows VMP – Fuel Reduction/Fuel Break
350 Acres
Project completion date – The roadway right-of –way phase of the project has been completed. The fuel break phase has been delayed pending available resources.
- 4) Long VMP – Prescribed Fire
Acres 450
Projected completed date 07/20/04

Battalion 4:

- 1.) Oakhurst Basin VMP – Fuel Break/Fuel Modification
Phases 1, 2 and 3 have been funded through a Proposition 40 grant obtained by the Eastern Madera County Fire Safe Council.